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ABSTRACT

The first-year teaching experiences of urban teachers were studied to conceptualize the reality faced by urban teachers and to determine the implications of the urban environment for teacher education. Subjects were four graduates of a teacher education program that gave no particular attention to the urban context beyond placement for student teaching in an urban school. Two teachers taught in urban schools (kindergarten and grade 3), and two taught in suburban schools (kindergarten and grade 3). They were observed in their classrooms throughout the school year, and semistructured interviews identified their attitudes. The basic conclusion is that teaching in an urban setting is different and that teachers have to be different to succeed in schools with high numbers of at-risk students. Urban teachers need more education about developing the social skills of students, and they need information about poverty as well as ethnic cultures. They need opportunities to get to know the parents of their students, and they need interpersonal skills that enable them to deal with rejection, discouragement, and frustration. Urban teaching appears to be very different from teaching in the suburbs. (Contains 20 references.) (SLD)

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FIRST YEAR TEACHING EXPERIENCES OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD URBAN TEACHERS

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Theoretical Framework

A generally accepted goal for teacher education is preparation of teachers capable of working with diverse populations. Diversity is defined broadly, but its most typical application is in terms of racial/ethnic/economic differences. The urban schools are a microcosm for diversity in this country.

Teacher socialization provides a framework for consideration of diversity in schools. Zeichner's (1990) interpretive socialization paradigm focuses on interaction between school and individual. Hoy and Feldman (1987) identified two constructs of school context: 1) affective context, the ambience of the school created by such things as teacher morale and 2) objective context, the socio-economic status of the school. Studies of urban schools focus more on the objective context, although there is an interaction effect. Kagan (1992) reviewed current research on the role of context in teacher socialization and reported four contextual factors affecting growth and success: the teaching assignment (the nature of content and pupils to be taught); colleagues' willingness to provide support; parental relationships; and degree of autonomy and leadership afforded teachers.

Within these frameworks, it is understood that the context of urban schools is different, but there is debate over the impact of those differences on teacher preparation.

Haberman (1987) claimed that teacher education has not taken teaching context into account in preparing students for urban schools, that teacher education is not a "generic process" (p. 16).

Pretending that at risk students are invisible (or will disappear)...by treating the education of at risk students as subject to the same principles which govern non-urban schooling is folly of monumental proportions. Schooling is a function of not only subject matter but of analyzing the interactions among the nature of the student, the nature of the school, and the nature of teaching. How these three realms interact makes urban schooling a different order of enterprise, not merely a difference of degree. (p.)

Pasch et al. (1993) presented both sides of the issue which provided the impetus for their research. They explicated the opposing view from Haberman's.

The curriculum to prepare urban teachers is essentially identical to the curriculum followed by students in quality teacher education programs at multiple sites with the exception that required field experiences occur in urban schools. There are no significant differences in the knowledge base needed by successful urban teachers as compared to teachers in other settings, and all teachers operate within differing contexts. Thus, few, if any, specialized classes for urban teacher education students are necessary. (p. 11)

Haberman's theories (1987, 1993) regarding the education of urban teachers focus on selection into programs as the key. Pasch et al. (1993) found that urban teachers viewed context inside and outside the workplace as the single most critical factor influencing success. Other factors were management skills, instructional planning, instructional variety, knowing the child, beliefs that all children can learn, and understanding the urban community.

Some studies have attempted to identify characteristics of successful teachers of at risk students (Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Haberman, 1991; Means & Knapp, 1991); Knapp, 1990). Zeichner (1993) summarized the characteristics and stated "With a few exceptions, there seem to be a common set of dispositions, knowledge, and skills which are needed to teach ethnic- and language-minority students regardless of the particular circumstances of specific groups of students (p. 6)." These characteristics include high expectations, strong identity, teaching methods, knowledge, understanding of the community, and advocacy for justice.

Many scholars believe that the issue of preparing teachers to work in urban schools with diverse, at risk students has not been a research priority in teacher education (Grant & Secada, 1990; Weiner, 1993; Zeichner, 1993). Weiner claimed, "No body of scholarship yet exists that connects student and teacher performance to systemic characteristics of urban schools. No sustained or systematic debate about urban school effects on teacher and student performance has transpired.." (p. 75). Weiner emphasized the interconnectedness of teacher behavior, student performance, and school characteristics, suggesting an environmental approach to research with urban teachers. Zeichner (1990) also emphasized interaction effects. Both scholars averred that teachers' voices had not been an integral part of the debate about teaching in urban schools.

One way to study the interaction of teachers and environment is to hear the teachers' voices and to visit the environment. This study attempted to describe some of the reality of urban schools from the perspective of first year teachers. What the teachers said and did were the sources.

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to describe the first year teaching experiences of urban teachers. A basic is that the urban environment creates a different context and to educate teachers to work in the urban context, teacher educators need to have access to the reality of the environment. The intention was to describe these experiences in order to conceptualize the reality for urban teachers and determine what the implications are for teacher education. Another objective was to identify characteristics of teachers who are successful (or unsuccessful) in urban schools.

Subjects

The subjects were four 1992 graduates of a teacher education program at an urban university who were placed in urban schools for one quarter of the program but otherwise given no particular attention to that context. They were expected to be successful based on their performance in the program.

Sarah is a first year kindergarten teacher in a large suburban system. Her students are Caucasian and middle to upper middle class. She is Caucasian and 34 years old and the single mother of three elementary school children. She made a career change from business to teaching after her husband left the family and abdicated all responsibility. Her family background is middle class with a strong religious influence.

Lillian is a first year third grade teacher in a large suburban school system. Her students are Caucasian and middle to upper middle class. She is Caucasian, 29, and single. She made a career change from business, because she did not find the business world fulfilling, although she was very successful as a stock broker. Her family background is middle class with an emphasis on helping others.

Carol is a first year kindergarten teacher in an urban school system. Her students are all African Americans. The students all qualify for free lunch, and only one child has a father in the home. She is 38, Caucasian, and married with two children. She made a career change from business to fulfill a lifetime desire to be a teacher. Her family background is upper middle class with a strong emphasis on community service.

Ashley is a first year third grade teacher in an urban school system. All her students are African American except one Hispanic boy and two Caucasian girls. About 60% of her children qualify for free lunch. She is Caucasian, 29, and married with no children. She made a career change from business, because she was bored with business. The alternative preparation program was appealing to her, even though she had not given very much thought to being a teacher. Her family background is lower middle class with a strong religious influence.

Carol and Ashley are the main focus of this paper. Carol had a more successful and less discouraging first year of teaching than did Ashley. Ashley had many management problems. She got very

discouraged with her teaching situations. This paper attempts to be descriptive and to focus on what both teachers had in common as urban that was not common for the suburban teachers. Carol's story provided data for identifying characteristics of successful urban teachers. Her first year was successful from her point of view and the researcher's, whereas Ashley and the researcher probably could describe her experience only as limited success. The reasons for these differences may be attributed to grade level differences, school system size, attitudes, background, or any number of factors.

Methods

The author observed the subjects in their classrooms eight times during the school year for a period of two to three hours. One to two hour semi-structured interviews followed each observation, and one group interview occurred at the end of the year. Data from the suburban teachers was used to help focus on what was peculiar to urban schools and not to all first year teachers, all classrooms, etc. The interview data were most useful, but the observational data helped confirm or disconfirm interviews. If only interview data were available, the findings from this study would be very different, because many of the questions in the interviews were prompted by observations.

Analysis proceeded concurrently with data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984; and Strauss 1987). Data were examined, compared and coded for domains or categories. These domains were defined and expanded based on examples within the data. Patterns were identified across domains. Subsequent observations and interviews focused on areas suggested by concurrent analysis. Subject debriefings helped enrich and clarify domains of data.

Findings

The following are the domains and findings regarding urban education within each category. The domain is underlined, and the specific findings are boldfaced followed by evidence to support them.

Attitudes about Students

Teaching in an urban school can challenge beliefs about and behavior toward students and challenge the teacher's perception of self.

In October, Ashley "found myself doing things I never thought I's do--sometimes I lose it." She felt bad and talked to principal who said you have to be harsh because that's what they have at home. In February, Ashley stated "I came to change things, I would not let it change me and be like teachers I saw last year. It's changing me." In May, she said "I always thought of myself as patient, a wise counselor, level-headed with time to listen. These

kids are so needy...my patience has worn thin. They want so much from me.." (5/93) Many times during the year, she seemed disappointed to have learned some new dimension of herself discrepant with her self image. By December, Carol "found myself grabbing children." She made a New Year's resolution not to let situations and the environment influence her treatment of the children.

Ashley made a lot of comments about the children like "they don't listen", (1/93) "the kids limit my creativity in teaching," (4/93) "the whole school is getting bad attitudes," (11/92) "the education system doesn't need to change, the family does," (3/93) and "after 2nd grade you can't change how the kids are." (5/93) She stated, "I always assumed that cooperation was innate." She also had a hard time with children not being motivated. "My big impatience is with apathy." She seemed never to have considered how children may be unmotivated in school, a reflection of her own drive and ambition.

Discouragement is a natural phenomenon for urban teachers.

Although the suburban teachers became discouraged during the year, it was not as pervasive a phenomenon as it was for the urban teachers, nor did they question if they were suited for what they were doing. Ashley, too, did not question if she was meant to be a teacher, but she did question if she was meant to teach at risk children. Ashley's predominant approach to life was a success orientation; in her autobiography she was quite clear that she had succeeded in most of her life's endeavors and expected to success. At winter break, though, she questioned if an urban school was where she should be. She returned in January with renewed hope and vigor, a cycle repeated over and over throughout the year. After spring break, she said "I thought I'd quit because of the way they treated me." Carol also became discouraged at times but more with the restraints placed on her by the school environment than with the children, but she also indicated that she may not teach "forever" in a low socio-economic status school.

Personal relationships with students are very important.

The urban teachers stressed their relationships with the children more than the suburban teachers. Carol emphasized relationship and trust in comments she made throughout the year and in her interactions with children; she stated in one interview that doing so was her most important function as a teacher. Ashley stated, "They need more of me" (5/94), and she put great faith in her school being designated a Chapter 1 school with smaller classes. The suburban teachers exhibited a more "business-like" attitude with their focus being on teaching and curriculum more than on their relationships with the children.

Urban teachers desensitize themselves to the environment in which their students live and focus on what happens in the classroom.

In February Ashley said she'd become more "hardnosed." "My feelings about their situation has changed--I'm not as naive--I knew things were bad but not how bad. I'm not as empathetic." She stated she had realized she couldn't give them all they need and was not trying to attend to every problem or taking as much time to talk over problems. She said, snapping her fingers, "Now I do it like that. But I'm not saying I don't care. I care so much. The way I try to make it better is to plan better." (3/93) This statement seemed to show her realization that feeling sorry for the children doesn't help, that she can't take care of all their problems, but she can teach them.

Carol stated "I realize I can't change the world--I do my best and push on--I can't change things outside the classroom." (1/93) She was "anxious to make the classroom a place of safety but, by the end of the year, was not so anxious about things I can't affect." (5/93)

Urban teachers consider their efficacy in light of the environment in which they teach. This phenomenon did not seem to lead to lower expectations, indeed Carol and Ashley both had very high expectations for their children. What it did was to make the teachers aware of what they realistically could and could not achieve.

School Environment

Administrative and collegial support is crucial.

Both Ashley and Carol felt supported by their school administrations. Carol described her principal as a "can do" type of person who believed all children could learn, all teachers could teach them, and all parents cared about their children. Ashley said that her supportive administrative staff was what "keeps me from being overwhelmed." (11/93) She had a field experience in the school during her teacher education program and one reason she accepted the position teaching there was the administrative support. This support obviously was very important to both teachers and kept them going in hard times. Even though she believed the administration put too much emphasis on basals and standardized tests, "they don't question me all the time, but they may after ITBS (laugh)." (3/93)

Ashley seemed to have a somewhat ambivalent attitude about her colleagues. She felt very different from the majority in terms of her teaching style. "No one's doing anything similar to what I'm doing." (1/93) Statements she made about other teachers were that they have compensated for the management problems by making students learn with worksheets and that many teachers do their work during the school day and walk out at 2:45. She believed that some of her management problems stemmed from the children's being more accustomed to a more structured, teacher-centered environment. When asked, she said one teacher was teaching differently but that she had a teaching assistant and an intern which enabled her to

make the more student-centered teaching work. Ashley not only did not feel encouraged to teach creatively but also felt some pressure not to do so. "On grade level, I don't get a lot of animosity. I've gotten a lot of attention around here--people come by just to see what I'm doing. They say 'you're trying to show us up'--they're kidding but it's still a dig. Some won't do anything to make me look better. They don't understand why I put so much work in it." (1/93) Yet in October, she stated that the best thing about teaching so far was the support from faculty and the people she worked with, the "materials, an arm around the shoulder, compliments".

Carol also believed she was different from the other teachers in terms of instruction and management, but she felt very supported by them. The norm at her school was to share materials and ideas, and the teachers were not competitive with each other but cooperative. Consequently, she felt different but not alienated and lonely like Ashley. This perception was a very important difference in the two teachers and seemed to have an adverse effect on Ashley's teaching.

Parents

Attitudes about parents can affect the urban teacher's ability to work with the children of the parents.

In October, Ashley reported parental support as one of the best things. "They're excited about the things I'm doing and report changes in the kids." As the year went on, though, she shifted her view and believed most of the parents to be "apathetic" and that most of her students' problems in school were related to the family situation. She also was unsure that the school encouraged parental support. "Our parents are scared of this setting." (5/93) She felt very unsure about how to get her parents involved. At Carol's school, the administration insisted on parental participation and on teachers' respecting parents, and Carol believed parents felt welcome at the school. Carol sent home a weekly newsletter, called each child's parent(s) at least three times a quarter, sent home a weekly evaluation, and met all the parents. These differences in school stance, personal effort, and attitude toward parents seemed to work to Carol's advantage as a teacher. Everything she said and did seemed to view parents as a resource, whereas Ashley sometimes viewed parents and families as obstacles to be overcome.

Beliefs and Attitudes

Teachers' beliefs are instrumental in the decision to teach in urban schools.

Ashley "based my life decisions on religious convictions." She believes that God has a purpose and direction for her. Her perspective is described as belief in the "moralistic principles of Baptists and Christians. You reap what you sow. You have to go

through valleys to get to the peaks." (11/93) When she heard about the alternative preparation program only two days before the application deadline, she believed that "if the Lord intended me to be a teacher, I would get in." (11/93) She stated that the effect of her Christianity on her teaching was that it gave her a sensitive and caring attitude, that her beliefs were "what put me here instead of in the suburbs." (11/93) She also believed her faith gave her "compassion and strength in the frustrating times" and kept her from giving up. (11/93)

Carol's belief system also influenced her decision to teach in the urban schools. She described a family of origin which was very civic minded. Her father was very active in the civil rights movement in Atlanta. She described herself as a "professional volunteer" who was involved in many community activities and who at one time was on ten Boards and chair of six. The desire to be a teacher was a long time one, and she believes teaching is an extension of her need to work for a better community. "I have a responsibility. ...This opportunity has put out the fire that I need to be contributing. ...my beliefs on equality are put to work here, this is my hands-on effort, not helping people from a distance." (4/26) She stated that "All that I've done and all my experiences enrich what I do in the classroom. I have a broad perspective, have been on both sides (on committees and now here). I'm not afraid of poverty or these kids. I don't feel sorry for them or feel they can't do. I'm not afraid of their mamas; they get mad, but I know what they're going through. That comes from being my age and being involved since I was a little girl with problems that don't have a solution. I don't worry about the masses anymore; I can make a difference in one child's life. (12/93)

It is unclear exactly how their belief systems influenced Carol's and Ashley's teaching. Carol was more successful and much less discouraged by the situations of her children or the difficulties of teaching them, and it may be that her beliefs based on experience rather than just on faith made her expectations more realistic; she definitely was not out to save the world, whereas Ashley sometimes did reflect that perspective.

Race was a peripheral issue for urban teachers.

Carol stated that "we all bring prejudices to the table," but that she thought she was "sensitive." She was conscious of the need to discuss race as part of the curriculum and was aware of some of her own "racial tension" surfacing in teaching Black history and when she took the children to a farm, and the people seemed unprepared for her group of African Americans. She did not attribute any problems she had to racial differences. "Race is not so much an issue as poverty--it's so insidious, it blows my mind." (4/93)

Ashley mentioned racial tension at the school between teachers (3/93) which she attributed to the merging of two elementary schools. She also expressed some fear of being in the neighborhoods where her students lived. (2/93) She did not feel

any racial tension between herself and her students or their parents.

The interviews nor the observations indicated any strong racial prejudice or tension in the classrooms. Carol only mentioned race when specifically questioned about it, and Ashley only mentioned it one other time.

Management

Urban teachers use more overt management techniques including reminders of appropriate behavior, positive reinforcement, and touching.

Once in a 45 minute period, Carol called on children 20 times for management purposes ("I know you're listening"; "Eyes up here", etc). These reminders were a constant part of the class but were not disruptive of the lesson. Ashley used even more management behavior and would stop what she was doing to reprimand the children. Carol's method was more effective. The striking aspect, though, was how much more effort Carol put into management in order to be as successful as the suburban teachers. Her classroom was as orderly as the suburban kindergarten's teacher's, but she never was able to quit being on top of management at all times. Neither suburban teacher ever expressed fear of losing control. Both urban teachers did, especially Ashley. It seemed to be a possibility that was always lurking on the perimeter of the classroom. This fear of loss of control may be an important factor in the ever constant management techniques. Both urban teachers agreed that it was necessary to "get the management techniques in place" in order to be able to teach.

Both urban teachers felt pressure from administration and other teachers to be a more strict disciplinarian. Carol stated that discipline was not a problem when it's her idea but when she was enforcing school rules with which she disagrees or working on curriculum requirements with which she disagrees, she found herself "preaching." (4/93) This pressure to run an orderly classroom and to have students behave in certain ways outside the classroom was characteristic of both urban schools but not of the suburban schools where the teachers felt more individually responsible for setting the standards for their children.

Curriculum

A focus on standardized tests drives urban teachers.

In October, Ashley stated that "the thing we're working on right now is ITBS--if I were in Gwinnett or north county it wouldn't be important. Our kids are always gonna fail." In February, she said, "I'm pushing skills and tests and they don't like it--it's boring." In March she said that "The ITBS doesn't mean a hill of beans to me," but that it was stressed by her administration. In May, she described the testing process as a "bad experience which intimidated my kids. There's a lot my kids know

that the test wouldn't show." Carol also felt "driven" by paper and pencil tests. She worked it in but it was not what she considered the important stuff. Neither of the suburban teachers ever mentioned standardized tests. Other studies confirm the standardized test emphasis in urban schools (Commins & Miramontes, 1989; Smith, 1991).

Both urban teachers felt a strong sense of autonomy, in spite of the emphasis on standardized tests. Ashley said the emphasis had "stifled me a little but not to the point where I feel like I'm not making decisions." (3/93) Carol stated that even though "I need to go through the workbook, no one tells me how to do it." (4/93)

Urban teachers have a greater need to supplement the curriculum.

Each of the urban teachers expressed frustration with the system curriculum and a great need to supplement it. Each of the suburban teachers were more satisfied with the proscribed curriculum and freer to deviate from it. Carol stated she would like to do more whole language but is required to follow the commercial reading curriculum of the school (Houghton-Mifflin). Ashley said "I do better if teach whole group and then go to small group but county curriculum isn't set up that way, it's by levels." She would like to "throw away the basals and do whole language." (3/93) Both urban teachers believed the typical textbook curriculum is not relevant to the children they teach. Carol stated that the "curriculum sets up poor kids because they are not familiar with the concepts used." (4/93) She gave an example of some work that depended on the children knowing what a jet plane was, something almost none of her children had seen or heard of. Ashley stated that she was "constantly trying to figure out what's gonna work." (10/92) Carol said "I teach in small steps, make it concrete, use examples relevant to the children, make it fun." (12/92)

Teaching

Urban teachers focus on social skills as well as on academic skills.

Both urban teachers often expressed the need to teach social skills to the children in their classes. Lillian and Sarah rarely mentioned social skills. Ashley believed that listening skills and social skills keep children from learning and from being able to benefit from creative teaching. (10/92) She also stated that she was most interested in "creating good human beings"--not so interested in scientific facts--"I want to build responsibility, teach social skills." (11/92) She said that "In this environment, the strongest need is social skills" and that if she could she would "spend till Christmas working on social skills." (2/93)

Carol said about her children, "They haven't played with each other, don't own things, don't trust each other." (3/93) She also said she spent a lot of time working on social skills, especially building a community.

Characteristics of Successful Urban Teachers.

The data in this section are from observations of and interviews with Carol only. Her case seemed to confirm some previous findings about characteristics of successful urban teachers. Cochran-Smith (1991) and Zeichner (1993) summarized the findings from other studies. Here parts of Carol's story are used to confirm these findings.

Zeichner identified the following characteristics which are confirmed by data on Carol's first year of teaching.

1. High expectations. Carol always exhibited a constant faith in her students. She talked about the children's problems in a very matter of fact way, as problems to be solved not inherent descriptions of her children. Everything she did and said confirmed that she believed "...all kids can learn and have the right to learn" (12/92). She did not let the children's poverty or other circumstances affect her expectations. "I don't feel sorry for the children. I am aware of their reality and their uniqueness." (12/92) "They're special but children are children--if I can understand their core needs then I can expect the same--the ones in my class can and will learn as much. I see an explosion of knowledge in my children despite their "deprived" backgrounds. ...we may need to provide more in this environment. ...It's not hard to teach poor kids. ...These kids are special, yeah, but so are mine and so do they have special needs. Some kids at private schools are just as lacking in parental care. All kids are special." (3/93)

2. Knowledge of how to involve parents and a good understanding of the school's community. Carol sent home a weekly newsletter that sometimes was 4 pages long, she visited homes, called all parents. She was connected with her families. "There's not one child whose parents I haven't met." (3/93) She also had great respect for the families.

Of 25, 17 of my students can do high frequency words. This is due to parents working with children. ...I had a party and had seven parents here and no trouble getting things. ...Parents feel welcome and heard here...due to my and administration's attitude. ...I don't assume they can't understand anything, I explain in ways appropriate for parents. ...The circumstances are different here but everything is possible. ...The assumption is that socially the children can do but they need more structure and direction. We accomplish the same things, just do it differently. My principal says in any community, things are going on that affect the children, ours are just more dramatic and happen more often." (3/93)

3. Has a wide variety of teaching strategies. Carol, during any two to three hour observation, used six to fifteen different techniques with the children. She was an especially good story teller and used stories to involve her children. She also supplemented the curriculum. She said, "I hate Houghton-Mifflin. They don't know the concepts. So I bring in things like the B Bear

and B things they know. For example, the picture of the bottle-- they called it a 'drank.' ...I do lots of art projects." (2/93)

4. Promotes an inclusive multicultural curriculum. Carol was teaching about Hanukkah in December, and her treatment was not cursory. She told a story of a boy and girl during the time of the historical evolution of the religious holiday and made it very exciting. She got the children involved ("What do you think Mama said?" "Then what happened?") and asked questions about details ("What is their special church called?" "When their enemies took the Jews, what did they do?" "Hanukkah is the holiday but who are the people and what is their story?") The kindergarten children had an amazing amount of knowledge. Carol also included African Americans in her curriculum throughout the year.

5. Need to be involved in the broader political struggles for achieving a more just and humane society. Carol had an extensive history of being involved. As stated above, she was a "professional volunteer" and served on many boards, all of which supported causes related to making the world a better place. She flatly stated, "I am an advocate for the needs of children." (3/93)

Cochran-Smith (1991) stressed the need to "teach against the grain" to be successful in urban schools.

...teaching against the grain is also deeply embedded in the culture and history of teaching at individual schools and in the biographies of particular teachers and their individual or collaborative efforts to alter curricula, raise questions about common practices, and resist inappropriate decisions. These relationships can only be explored in schools in the company of experienced teachers who are themselves engaged in complex, situation-specific, and sometimes losing struggles to work against the grain. (p. 280)

She described teachers who teach against the grain and could have been describing Carol.

1. "...they must provide evidence that their students are making sufficient progress according to standard measures of learning, despite the fact that they place little stock in those measures and believe, on the contrary, that they work against the best interests of children." (284) In November, Carol said, "...the system says they have to pass the paper and pencil test in reading. I'm committed to literature and having them read and write." At the end of the year she said, "Next year I think I'll be braver. Won't have as much evaluation next year." Her children did very well on tests, so well that her principal bragged about it to the author.

2. "...understand and work both within and around the culture of teaching and the politics of schooling at their particular schools and within their larger school systems and communities." (p. 284). Carol's attitude about her paraprofessional was one example of this characteristic. She believed it was good that the paraprofessional lived in community, but she made it clear she didn't want to know all the gossip. She also accepted that the

paraprofessional treated children differently (e.g., talked to them more harshly); she set some standards but did not try to make the paraprofessional act just like her.

Carol could ignore what was happening in the community. She taught children from two schools and two neighborhoods, and there was some animosity among groups. Carol would not get into "don't let my child play with that one."

Carol was not afraid to work within the system to change things. When the school decided to send one of her students to developmental kindergarten, she fought it, talked to the psychologist and persuaded them to do a home intervention for this abused child. She also fought a policy requiring that children be failed in subjects (given an F) if they were to be retained at grade level. "If I want to retain a child I have to give an F in reading or math. I wrote a letter of protest to the policy committee of the administration and based my argument on positive self esteem. Maybe this is one of those moral dilemmas. I called every parent and they already knew I was thinking of retaining the child. I got all the kindergarten teachers to sign the letter. I gave all the latest research on self-esteem and progressing along the continuum." (3/93)

Carol seemed to understand that she had to work within and around a community characterized by poverty. "I'm not shocked by poverty. It is a vapor that seeps through the room--you just have to deal with it and go on." (3/93)

3. "They have to teach differently without judging the ways others teach or dismissing the ideas others espouse." (p. 284) Carol always spoke well of her colleagues. "There's not a teacher in that school I don't respect. ...I have something to learn from all of them." (3/93) She described herself as "in the minority" in her discipline--"Most grab and yell"-- but she did not condemn the other teachers. She also recognized differences in her and her principal's management styles, while still appreciating the qualities of the principal. "Yes, Ms. ____ wants the building quiet. But she also says "Good job!" and "Where's your sister?" She recognizes the children as individual children."

4. "They have to be astute observers of individual learners with the ability to pose and explore questions that transcend cultural attribution, institutional habit, and the alleged certainty of outside experts." (p. 285)

In October, when asked to describe her class, Carol described individuals in the class with great detail. She did not talk about attributes of her class as a whole. In each interview, she talked about specific children and the progress they'd made and problems they had.

She acknowledged the environment in which her children lived but did not condemn it or use it as an excuse for her children. "Kids in the inner city come from very different background. " She mentioned language experience, yelling and whipping at home, limited concept of social rules and personal space. "So I have to relate the management system to my kids. My kids know I won't hit and that when I raise my voice, I've reached a different level of

discipline. So my management technique is that I want them to have freedom and responsibility. I spend a lot more time on things that haven't been done at home. ...They have a structured and unstructured environment at home. They don't leave the apartment so don't know limits. Mamas come down hard and that's what they respond to. It takes a long time to get them respond to voice and words." (1/11) "They get so physical. Dammit, they see things we've never seen!" "I have to be compassionate and realistic. ...can't wallow in it. The hard thing for me was to balance compassion and move on." (3/93) "I push. I say "Dammit, Mama, this is important. But if the parent won't and I've done all I can, then I can't change the world. (3/93) "At some point I have to accept that some won't get it and don't feel real guilty. (3/93)

Conclusion

The basic conclusion of this study is that teaching in an urban setting is different and that teachers have to be different to succeed in schools with high numbers of at risk students. For Ashley and Carol, teaching in urban schools was a very different experience than the teaching experience of Sarah and Lillian in suburban schools. Carol was an outstanding teacher and displayed characteristics which seemed to enhance her success. She described her success:

I created an atmosphere nd modeled community spirit--I take credit for the atmosphere. To see these kids writing. We don't have fist fights--they don't hit anymore. They call each other by name and not the street stuff. They share, listen to each other, talk and read to each other. I've provided atmosphere but they've molded it. They've caught on that because they live cooperatively, they can do a lot more. To see their sense of pride, accomplishment and self worth--it's the greatest feeling. That atmosphere fosters learning. They've all learned a lot, even the ones not going to first grade. They are proud of each other--they cheered for a boy who finally wrote "to." They were nice to a new boy--his table were all his "special buddies." (3/93)

And as she said, "My kindergarten classroom is different from others." (3/93)

Implications. Implications derived for teacher education based on the findings described above and on the two teachers' responses to the question "What do teachers in urban schools need to know?" are:

Urban teachers need more education about developing the social skills of students. If undeveloped social skills keep children from learning, then we need to teach those skills. Certainly, early childhood education has a special responsibility to focus on developing social skills. In her class, Carol developed a "learning community." In "our community," children did not hit, lie, steal, treat each other disrespectfully. The community did acknowledge that these things happened in other communities; it

would be ridiculous to deny violence when one parent was murdered, when children in the classroom were abused, when other teachers yelled at students, and when many parents were in trouble with the authorities. "But this is our community, and we don't do that here." (Carol to children, 12/93)

Urban teachers need information about poverty as well as ethnic cultures. As Carol said, it is poverty much more than ethnic identity which shapes urban schools. Teachers need to know the extent of poverty and the effects of poverty. They also need to know what other social agencies work with their students and how to interact with those agencies. Urban teachers need information about what they can and cannot affect in their students' lives and restrict their expectations to those things over which they have control. They also need to learn that lowered expectations is not an effective response to working with children from poverty. Urban teachers need help in defining realistic success goals. Urban teachers need to redefine "normal," in terms other than what is normal for middle class children. It is normal for a child who lives in an insecure world to do or believe certain things that would be abnormal for a child who lives in a secure environment.

Urban teachers need to have opportunities to get to know the parents of their students. Almost all parents love and care about their children and want what is good for them. Teachers need to accept this basic premise and look for confirming behavior in parents, rather than assuming that poverty means neglect.

Urban teachers need interpersonal skills related to being able to deal with rejection, discouragement, frustration. Research on teachers showed that successful teachers expect to have problems. Successful urban teachers need to have realistic expectations about what it is like teaching in urban schools. They need to expect discouragement and work through it, rather than believing that a good teacher would not be discouraged. They need to be able to handle behaviors unknown to them in a matter of fact way and not take it personally as an insult to the teacher's authority. They need to examine what it means when children behave in certain ways (e.g., are unmotivated) and not just try to place blame on the children or their parents.

Urban teachers need to be taught methods such as cooperative learning and whole language with adaptations for different populations of children, particularly for children for whom distrust rather than cooperation may be a normal development given their environment or for whom competition is the norm. Urban teachers also need to be prepared for the emphasis on standardized test scores and taught ways to make children successful on tests while not spending the whole year "teaching to the test."

Preliminary data analysis indicates that education of teachers for urban schools may be substantively different from general teacher education. These teachers' voices spoke clearly of differences between teaching in urban schools and in suburban schools. Both Carol and Ashley insisted at the end of their first year teaching, "It is different!" (6/93) Teacher educators need to know more about the culture of urban schools and what teachers need to help them be successful teachers in urban schools. These findings support Haberman (1987, 1993) in his insistence that teachers in urban schools be educated differently from other teachers and that selection is a key issue.

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